

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 1631

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PGOV CG
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE AND REORGANIZATION: HALFWAY HOUSE?

REF: (A) KINSHASA 9759 DATED 11/19/76 (B) KINSHASA 10641 DATED
12/23/76 (C) KINSHASA 1630

1. THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL (REF A) THAT PERSISTENT RUMORS
LATE LAST YEAR HAD IT THAT MOBUTU WAS ON THE VERGE OF A
FUNDAMENTAL REFORM OF THE STRUCTURE OF HIS REGIME, IMPLYING
A DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER AWAY FROM THE ONE-MAN REGIME
WHICH HAD EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS. WHAT TOOK
PLACE IN FACT (REF B) WAS A PROMISE BY MOBUTU TO VIGOROUSLY
PURSUE ECONOMIC REFORMS ALLIED WITH A SYSTEM OF COMMITTEES
WHICH GAVE THE PRESIDENCY'S SERVICE DU PLAN THE FINAL SAY
IN ECONOMIC MATTERS. THIS LED SOME OBSERVERS TO BELIEVE THAT
BISENGIMANA, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY, AND
HENCE OF THE SERVICE DU PLAN, WOULD CONTINUE IN THE CATBIRD
SEAT AND THAT REAL REFORMS WERE UNLIKELY. STILL, THE RUMORS
OF AN IMPENDING GOVERNMENT SHAKEUP PERSISTED, AND CONTENTED
THAT PUBLIC AND ELITE CRITICISM OF THE MOBUTU REGIME HAD REACHED
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SUCH A POINT THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO REMOVE HIMSELF FROM THE
DAY-TO-DAY OPERATION OF GOVERNMENT.

2. THE GOVERNMENT SHAKEUP CAME ON FEBRUARY 23 (REF C). IN SUM,
MOBUTU HAS SAID THAT THE LATEST RESHUFFLE/REORGANIZATION IS IN
RESPONSE TO THE PEOPLES' CALL FOR CHANGE AND IS THE
MANIFESTATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S

WILL TO CARRY THROUGH WITH A STRONG ECONOMIC STABILIZATION PROGRAM. IN ADDITION TO REMOVING CERTAIN KEY OFFICIALS--NOTABLY BISENGIMANA--MOBUTU HAS REORGANIZED HIS GOVERNMENT IN THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT WAYS:

A) THE ALL-POWERFUL ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY IS PURPORTEDLY REDUCED TO THAT OF A PERSONAL CABINET.

B) ECONOMIC STABILIZATION WILL BE THE BUSINESS OF EACH MINISTER--THE STABILIZATION COMMITTEE IS ABOLISHED--BUT THERE WILL BE A LARGE CABINET COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY NGUZA ONE OF WHOSE MAIN FUNCTIONS WILL BE TO COORDINATE THE ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

C) BUT, THE SERVICE DU PLAN WILL BE A FULL-FLEDGED MINISTRY--AND MOBUTU WILL BE THE MINISTER IN CHARGE.

D) BISENGIMANA WILL REMAIN AS "CHARGE DE MISSION" (FUNCTION UNSPECIFIED) IN THE PRESIDENCY.

3. THE FOREGOING MOVES BY MOBUTU RAISE SOME OBVIOUS QUESTIONS:

A) THERE IS A POTENTIAL CONFLICT AMONG PLAN, NGUZA'S COMMISSION AND THE CENTRAL BANK IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC STABILIZATION.

B) IF IT TURNS OUT THAT THE PRESIDENT, THROUGH PLAN, MAINTAINS CONTROL OF THE STABILIZATION EFFORT, THEN WILL SAY IT WON'T WORK BECAUSE WHAT IS REQUIRED IS A CENTER OF CONTROL OUTSIDE THE PRESIDENCY.

C) WHAT, IN FACT, WILL BE BISENGIMANA'S ROLE? IF HE KEEPS THE PRESIDENT'S EAR, MUCH OF THE POLITICAL BENEFIT OF HAVING REMOVED HIM WILL BE LOST SINCE THERE WILL BE WIDESPREAD SUSPICION THAT MOBUTU'S RESHUFFLE WAS MORE OF A CHARADE THAN A REAL INTENT TO REFORM.

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4. COMMENT: WHILE MOBUTU HAS PLAYED THIS MOST RECENT RESHUFFLE/ REORGANIZATION AS REAL REFORM--"A BETTER METHOD TO RUN THE STATE"--AND AS A SIGN THAT HE WILL HOLD TO THE AUSTERITY PROGRAM, WE BELIEVE THAT MOST ZAIRIANS WILL REMAIN SKEPTICAL AT LEAST UNTIL THEY SEE HOW THESE DECISIONS WORK OUT IN PRACTICE. MOBUTU'S CONTROL OF PLAN IS LIKELY TO BE VIEWED AS A CLEAR INTENTION NOT TO DECENTRALIZE POWER. WE FURTHER GUESS THAT THE NEXT FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS WILL SEE CONTINUED PRESSURE FROM WAGE EARNERS AND CRITICISM FROM THE ELITES, INTELLECTUALS AND MAN ON THE STREET AS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION CONTINUES TO STAGNATE. THUS MOBUTU WILL CONTINUE TO BE PRESSURED FOR RESULTS ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE AND REFORM ON THE POLITICAL. AT THE SAME TIME, WE NOTE EDITORIALS IN THE GOVERNMENT PRESS WHICH ALLUDE TO CORRUPTION AND CALL FOR A THOROUGH HOUSECLEANING AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. WE SUSPECT, THEREFORE, THAT WE HAVE NOT SEEN THE LAST HEAD ROLL; IN FACT, MOBUTU MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY IN STOPPING THE REFORM PROCESS NOW THAT IT HAS BEGUN, ALBEIT IN AN AS YET INCHOATE FASSION.

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